



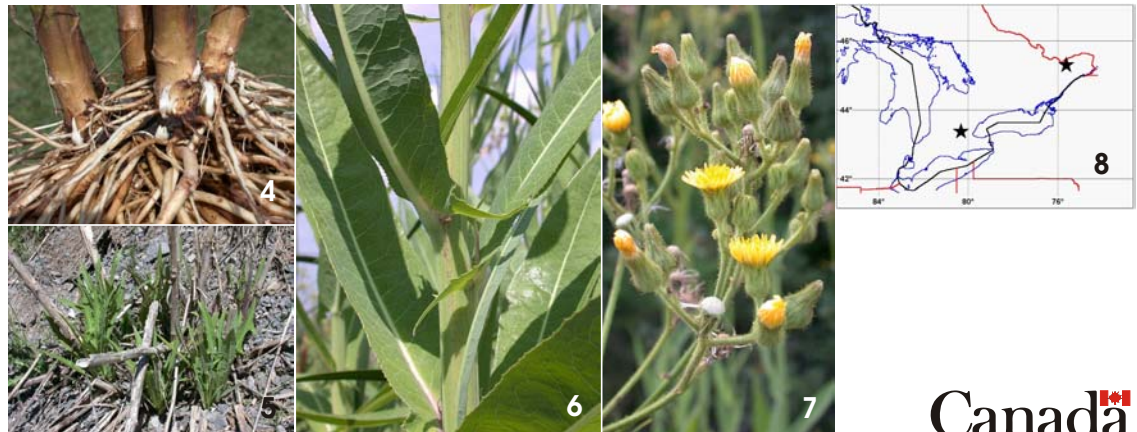
Sonchus palustris L. Marsh sow-thistle – laiteron des marais

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Marsh sow-thistle is a perennial Eurasian species. It produces dense colonies with the hollow stems up to about 5 metres tall (Fig. 1 & 2). The stems are killed by frost and can accumulate in extensive piles of litter (Fig. 3). Vegetative reproduction is from extensive budding at the root crown (Fig. 4). The leaves are similar to other species of *Sonchus*. Basal leaves (Fig. 5) are shallowly or deeply lobed like *S. arvensis* (field sow-thistle). The upper leaves (Fig. 6) are not lobed, but are finely toothed with short prickles. The base of the upper leaves has acute downward pointing auricles and the mid-vein is decurrent on the stem as a ridge (Fig. 6). The flowers of marsh sow-thistle (Fig. 7) are about half the size of field sow-thistle. Like the typical form of field sow-thistle, the inflorescence of marsh sow-thistle is densely glandular hairy, but it is more compact and with more flower heads in the latter.

It is known to be introduced to North America at two widely separated sites in Ontario (Fig. 8). The Cambridge population (to the southwest) was first discovered in 1972 and the Ottawa population (the northeast site) in 1992, although both had probably been present for some time before discovery. At the Cambridge site plants occur along an old rail line and adjoining fields. John Morton reports that in 2002 the population had decreased by about half from the 1994 state, due to development in the immediate area. At Ottawa, the population has greatly expanded in the last 10 years and spread along the wet roadside ditches in the area.



References:

- Brunton, D.F.; Crompton, C.W.** 1993. Marsh sow-thistle, *Sonchus palustris* L. (Asteraceae) in Ontario: an addition to the introduced flora of North America. *Can. Field-Nat.* 107:341-344.
Morton, J.K.; Venn, J.M. 1995. The marsh sow-thistle (*Sonchus palustris*) in North America. *Rhodora* 97:93-95.

All photos taken at the Ottawa site in either May or August 2002.